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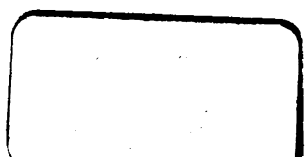
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THE FOOL OF
THE WORLD &
OTHER POEMS
by ARTHUR SYMONS

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THE FOOL OF THE WORLD &
OTHER POEMS.

Edwards

THE FOOL OF THE WORLD &
OTHER POEMS.

THE FOOL OF THE WORLD &
OTHER POEMS.
BY ARTHUR SYMONS.

JOHN LANE COMPANY,
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I.

THE FOOL OF THE WORLD :

A MORALITY.

TO AMY SAWYER.

The Fool of the World.

THE MAN.
DEATH, *as the Fool.*
THE SPADE.
THE COFFIN.

THE WORM.
YOUTH.
MIDDLE AGE.
OLD AGE.

*The Scene represents a dark wood, in which a Man,
dressed as a Pilgrim, is discovered standing.*

THE MAN.

This is the wood, and, my heart saith,
This is the sanctuary of Death.
I am afraid : am I not here
To face and question with my fear ?
Yet, if I ask and Death reply,
How should I bear it ? how should I
Live, knowing what it is to die ?

This life is evil, and must end :
But what if Death should be our friend ?
This life is full of weariness
And ignorance and blind distress,
And it may be that when man dies
Death, being altogether wise,
Shall take the darkness from his eyes.

But no, he cannot be our friend :
This life is evil, and must end
In evil ; every man that lives
Lives but the limit that Death gives,

And Death has seen all beauty pass,
And glory, as the flower of grass,
And nothing is that ever was.

This life is evil, and must end;
Alas ! and who shall be our friend ?
Though we have seen him through our fears
An old lean crooked man of years,
Death's wisdom must in heaven make dim
The brightest of the Seraphim :
I will kneel down and pray to him.

[He kneels down. DEATH enters as a woman, masked, with a fool's cap on which are seven bells, and a staff of seven bells in her hand.]

DEATH.

Come hither, all ye that draw breath :
What would ye of me ? I am Death.

THE MAN *[rising to his feet]*.
O foolish woman, capped and masked,
Not for your cap and bells I asked :
They make a loud and merry din,
But I was calling Wisdom in.

DEATH *[shaking the bells]*.

I am the Fool of the World. Come, follow ;
As your hopes are my bells hollow,
As my cap are your thoughts vain ;
I come and go and come again,
Singing and dancing, and with mirth
Lead the dance of fools on earth

To the tune of my seven bells :
Whither ? none returning tells ;
The seven bells sing to them : how soon
They fall asleep to the cradle-tune !

THE MAN.

What is this folly of lewd breath ?
Who shall be wise if this be Death ?

DEATH [*raising the staff of bells solemnly, like a sceptre*].

I, of all proud frail mortal things,
Choose for my own the greatest kings,
The bravest captains, the most wise
Doctors, the craftiest lords of lies,
The fairest women ; and all these
Praise me, and kneel about my knees ;
The glories of the world bow down
When the bells chatter in my crown.
I am the Fool of the World, I must
Lead the fools' dance home to the dust.

THE MAN.

If this be Death indeed that saith
Brave sayings in the name of Death,
O Death, take off from us the dread
Of the three makers of our bed :
The Spade, the Coffin strait and low,
The Worm that is our bed-fellow.

DEATH.

O men that know me not, afraid
Of Worm, of Coffin, and of Spade,

I will call in my labourers

That they may speak against your fears.

[DEATH beckons with her staff of bells, and one enters, in mean attire, bearing a spade.]

THE MAN.

O what is this that comes arrayed

In dusty clothes, and holds a spade ?

THE SPADE.

I am the builder of the house

Which Death to every guest allows ;

I dig the sure foundations deep

In the stony soil of sleep ;

There is no noise about the doors,

No noise upon the ancient floors,

Only the graveworm's dusty feet

Walk softly to and fro in it.

[DEATH beckons with her staff of bells, and one enters, in black clothes, bearing a coffin.]

THE MAN.

O who is this that bears, alack,

So strait a bed upon his back ?

THE COFFIN.

I am the only bed that gives

Sleep without dreams to all that lives,

An unawakening sleep to all ;

Sleep sweetly till you hear the call :

It may be one shall bid you rise,
At cock-crow, with untroubled eyes.

[DEATH *beckons with her staff of bells, and one enters, hooded and cloaked in rust-coloured clothes.*

THE MAN.

What is this thing of fearful form
That wears the livery of the worm?

THE WORM.

I am the Worm : have I not fed
Sweetly upon the bones of the dead,
Sweetly on bones that have been kings ?
No tenderer is the flesh that clings
About their bones than this that may
Wrap up a beggar turned to clav.
Beauty is the one morsel worth
The biting of the worm of earth ;
Surely the flesh of Helen made
A most sweet morsel : therein stayed
The sap that moved her flesh to fault,
For it was seasoned with pure salt.

THE MAN.

Though sexton Spade and Coffin bed
Be gentle to us, being dead,
Though, like dead Helen, in the ground
We with our bed-fellow sleep sound,
O Death, we know not if these know
The whole long way we have to go.

DEATH.

O men that know me not, and dread
Sleep, and the dreams about the bed,
I will call in my guests, that wait
To speak with you, without the gate :
Surely of them ye shall hear truth.

*[DEATH shakes her bells, and beckons to three
figures, differently dressed, of whom one is young,
one of middle age, and one old.]*

YOUTH.

We three, the guests of Death, are Youth,
And Middle Age, and Age. Bow down,
Old men, before a zany's crown,
For ye have lived ; but I, being young,
And scarce a shadow's length among
The morning roses of the May,
Met this false wanton on the way
And flew to her accursed lure ;
Now, for all pleasure, I endure
Earth, and the blind and stagnant night,
And, for most pain, remember light.

DEATH *[lowering the staff of bells]*.

What is this spirit of quenchless flame
That cries against my mercy's name ?
[To MIDDLE AGE.] Speak, and speak truth.

MIDDLE AGE.

The noon was high,
And the sun steadfast in the sky,
And all the day's strong middle heat

Weighed on me, and I felt my feet
A little weary of the crowd,
When the seven bells sang aloud ;
My heart was full of peace, my life
Was evil, and a place of strife ;
I followed, I am here, I had
Neither a sorry heart nor glad.

DEATH.

Shall but one spirit, soothed with dust,
Rise, and remember to be just ?
Speak, and speak truth, spirit of Age.

OLD AGE.

I tottered on my pilgrimage,
My dragging feet could hardly tread
The steep and stony road that led
By such hard ways to some dim end
I had forgotten, when this friend
Crooked a kind arm under my arm,
And I was there ; and I was warm,
And young, and no more scant of breath :
I praise the mercy of good Death.

THE MAN.

O Death, these voices, though they speak,
What can they tell us that we seek ?
Are not these voices mortal still
That utter the unforgotten will
Of mortal flesh, and not yet have
Found out the wisdom of the grave ?
These, though the body they forget,

Speak with the body's voices yet
A mortal speech ; but who of ye
Shall speak out of eternity ?
Only Death knows, only Death can
Speak the whole truth of death to man.
O Death, Death kind and piteous,
Have pity, and tell the truth to us !

DEATH [*rising*].

Shall the seven bells of folly know
Pity, that lead me where I go ?

[She throws down the staff of bells.]

Have pity, all ye that draw breath,
O men, have pity upon Death.
The bells that weigh about my brows,
And ring all flesh into my house,
Are a fool's witless bells ;

[She throws down the cap of bells.]

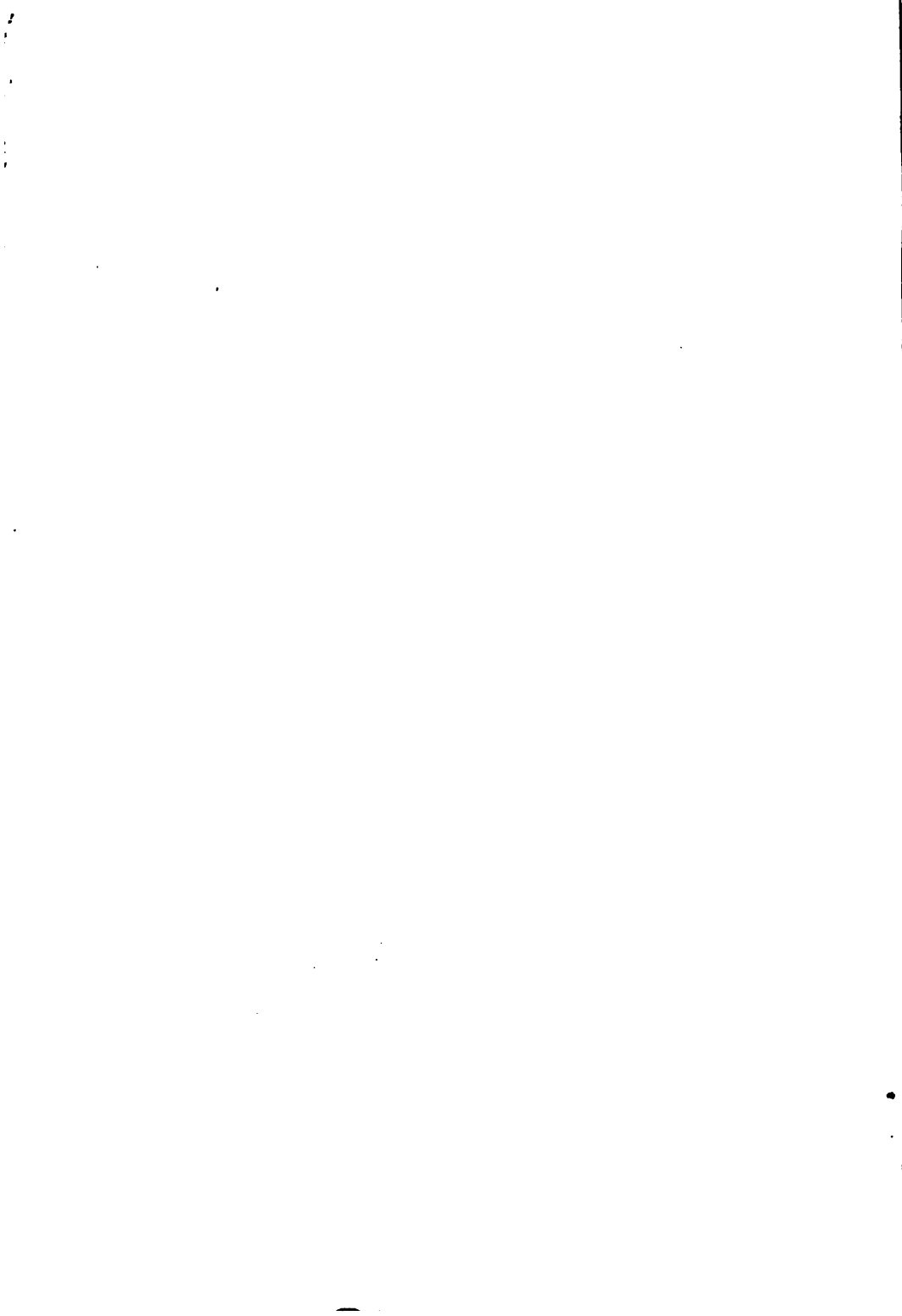
I lead

The dance of fools, a fool indeed ;
And my hands gather where they find,
For I am Death, and I am blind.

[She takes off the mask and falls on her knees.]

II.

MEDITATIONS.



Hymn to Energy.

God is ; and because life omnipotent
Gives birth to life, or of itself must die,
The suicide of its own energy,
God, of his unconsuming element,
Remakes the world, and patiently renews
Sap in the grass and ardour in the wind,
Morning and evening dews,
And tireless light and the untiring mind.

God makes things evil and things good ; he makes
Evil as good, with an unchoosing care,
Nor sets a brighter jewel in the air
Than on the brodered liveries of his snakes.
Man, make thy world thine own creation ; strive,
Colour thy sky, and the earth under thee,
Because thou art alive ;
Be glad, for thou hast nothing but to be.

Let every man be artist of his days,
And carve into his life his own caprice ;
And, as the supreme Artist does not cease
Labouring always in his starry ways,
Work without pause, gladly, and ask no man
If this be right or wrong ; man has to do
One thing, the thing he can :
Work without fear, and to thyself be true.

Thou art, as God is ; and as God outflows,
Weaving his essence into forms of life,

And, out of some perfection's lovely strife.
Marries the rose's odour with the rose,
So must thou of thy heavenly human state,
And of thy formless strife and suffering,
Thyself thyself create
Into the image of a perfect thing.

Giorgione at Castelfranco.

I went to seek a many-coloured soul,
But here all colours burn into one white
And are invisible as light ;
I sought the parts, and I have found the whole
In this calm, secretless,
Passionate, meditative, and austere
Refusal of perfection to appear
More like perfection, clothed in some excess.

Wasted Beauty.

This beauty is vain, this, born to be wasted,
Poured on the ground like water, spilled, and by no man
tasted ;

This, born to be loved, unloved shall remain
Till in white dust the lovely bones whiten again ;
Till, dust in white dust, this high heart shall be still,
It shall desire and its labour be lost, it shall not have its
will ;

You, armies had met, once, if you turned your head :
Shall there be nothing changed ? nothing, when you are
dead.

Unstable Pride.

Because her body is a tender thing,
Like powdered butterflies, that must remain
Prideless, if any hand have brushed their wing ;
Or looking-glass that any breath may stain ;
Or flower that being rudely handled shrinks ;
Or warm wax, that takes print from any seal ;
Is it indeed for this that woman thinks
To have the power of man under her heel ?
Yet why should his true glory be obscured
For such a poor proud fond fragility,
Or her possession be with pride endured
Because, possessed, she lacks security ?
Why should she be honoured of men because
She is dishonoured by so easy flaws ?

Time and Beauty.

Your hair, that burning gold
Naked might not behold,
Shall tarnish, and your skin
Wrinkle its satin in,
And your lips, like a rose
Uncolour and uncloze ;
Yet, because you are made
Of beauty, not arrayed
In beauty's covering,
Hold Time for a vain thing.
Time shall bid youth let fall
Its colours one and all,
And wither in chill air
Bright blood and burning hair ;
When these are overpast,
The bones of beauty last.

Time and Memory.

Shall I be wroth with Time, that has no stay,
And even dreams brings to a mortal end,
Because my soul to mortal things would lend
Her restless immortality away?

I have seen love, that was so quick a flame,
Go out in ashes ; I have seen desire
Go out in smoke, that was so bright a fire ;
And both become no better than a name.

I will be lessoned by the years that bring
For hearts forgetfulness, for thought relief ;
What bud in spring remembers the last leaf
Winter would not let go for all the spring ?

The Passing.

Weep not at all : crocuses in the grass,
Like little flames of gold, flicker and pass ;
The buds that after winter soothe the trees
Have longer days, but pass even as these ;
And the rejoicing and all-quickenning spring
Is but, in sleep, a brief awakening.
How little earth is wide and deep enough
To cover this that, while it lived, did love
Her lover no whit less than Mary did
Her son ; in what a shallow pit is hid
Beauty that, while it lived, did overpower
Strong men, and now is fallen like a flower.
This, which they leave alone under the sky
Naked, for rains to wash and suns to dry,
Veiled her soft flesh against the rain and sun
So fadeth every flower and every one.

Roman Meditation.

Learn wisdom, this is wisdom, cry
The teachers ; and the teachers die.
What should it profit me were mine
The wisdom of the Antonine,
Or Plato's ? What is it to me
If that be wisdom or this be ?
I know the same unfaded world,
A pebble from the brook, is hurled
Forth from Time's sling through endless ways,
And I shall have no part or place
Save in the pebble's senseless speed.
Wherein shall wisdom to my need
Minister ? how shall wisdom save
From the last folly of the grave ?

Indian Meditation.

Where shall this self at last find happiness ?
O Soul, only in nothingness.
Does not the Earth suffice to its own needs ?
And what am I but one of the Earth's weeds ?
All things have been and all things shall go on
Before me and when I am gone ;
This self that cries out for eternity
Is what shall pass in me :
The tree remains, the leaf falls from the tree.
I would be as the leaf, I would be lost
In the identity and death of frost,
Rather than draw the sap of the tree's strength
And for the tree's sake be cast off at length.
To be is homage unto being : cease
To be, and be at peace,
If it be peace for self to have forgot
Even that it is not.

Night.

The night's held breath,
And the stars' steady eyes :
Is it sleep, is it death,
In the earth, in the skies ?

In my heart of hope,
In my restless will,
There is that should not stop
Though the earth stood still,

Though the heavens shook aghast,
As the frost shakes a tree,
And a strong wind cast
The stars in the sea.

III.

AMENDS TO NATURE.

Amends to Nature.

I have loved colours, and not flowers ;
Their motion, not the swallows' wings ;
And wasted more than half my hours
Without the comradeship of things.

How is it, now, that I can see,
With love and wonder and delight,
The children of the hedge and tree,
The little lords of day and night ?

How is it that I see the roads,
No longer with usurping eyes,
A twilight meeting-place for toads,
A mid-day mart for butterflies ?

I feel, in every midge that hums,
Life, fugitive and infinite,
And suddenly the world becomes
A part of me and I of it.

Songs of Poltescoe Valley.

I.

Under the trees in the dell,
Here by the side of the stream,
Were it not pleasant to dream,
Were it not better to dwell ?

Here is the blue of the sea,
Here is the green of the land,
Valley and meadow and sand,
Seabird and cricket and bee ;

Cows in a field on the hill,
Farmyards a-fluster with pigs,
Blossoming birds on the twigs ;
Cool, the old croon of the mill.

II.

All day I watch the sun and rain
That come and go and come again,
The doubtful twilights, and, at dawn
And sunset, curtains half withdrawn
From open windows of the sky.
The birds sing and the seagulls cry
All day in many tongues ; the bees
Hum in and out under the trees
Where the capped foxglove on his stem
Shakes all his bells and nods to them.

All day under the rain and sun
The hours go over one by one,
Brimmed up with delicate events
Of moth-flights and the birth of scents
And evening deaths of butterflies.
And I, withdrawn into my eyes
From that strict tedious world within,
Each day with joyous haste begin
To live a new day through, and then
Sleep, and then live it through again.

III.

The woodpecker laughed as he sat on the bough,
This morning,
To give fair warning,
And the rain's in the valley now.

Look now and listen : I hear the noise
Of the thunder,
And deep down under
The sea's voice answer its voice.

All the leaves of the valley are glad,
And the birds too,
If they had words to,
Would tell of the joy they had.

Only you at the window, with rueful lips
Half pouting,
Stand dumb and doubting,
And drum with your finger-tips.

IV.

When the bats begin to flit
And the cottage lamp is lit,
When the nightjar in his throat
Trills his soft and woody note,
Then the hour has come to nook
In a corner with a book :
Keats or Campion shall it be ?
Nothing if not poetry.

Bee-like shall I seek for sweets
In the honeyed hedge of Keats ?
Or with Campion on the wing
Flutter, poise, and perch, and sing ?
Happy nightly to be found
With "blithe shades of underground,"
Or for a night-time to put on
The bright woes of Hyperion.

V.

To live and die under a roof
Drives the brood of thoughts aloof ;
To walk by night under the sky
Lets the birds of thought fly ;
Thoughts that may not fly abroad
Rot like lilies in the road ;
But the thoughts that fly too far
May singe their wings against a star.

VI.

Leaves and grasses and the rill
That babbles by the water-mill ;
Bramble, fern, and bulrushes,
Honeysuckle and honey-bees ;
Summer rain and summer sun
By turns before the day is done ;
Rainy laughter, twilight whirr,
The nighthawk and the woodpecker ;
These and such as these delights
Attend upon our days and nights,
With the honey-heavy air,
Thatched slumber, cream, and country fare.

VII.

Gold and blue of a sunset sky,
Bees that buzz with a sleepy tune,
A lowing cow and a cricket's cry,
Swallows flying across the moon.

Swallows flying across the moon,
The trees darken, the fields grow white ;
Day is over, and night comes soon :
The wings are all gone into the night.

To a Sea-Gull.

Bird of the fierce delight,
Brother of foam as white
And winged as foam is,
Wheeling again from flight
To some unfooted height
Where your blithe home is ;

Bird of the wind and spray,
Crying by night and day
Sorrowful laughter,
How shall man's thought survey
Your will or your wings' way,
Or follow after ?

What pride is man's, and why,
Angel of air, should I
Joy to be human ?
You walk and swim and fly,
Laugh like a man and cry
Like any woman.

I would your spirit were mine
When your wings dip and shine,
Smoothly advancing ;
I drink a breathless wine
Of speed in your divine
Aerial dancing.

Cornish Wind.

There is a wind in Cornwall that I know
From any other wind, because it smells
Of the warm honey breath of heather-bells
And of the sea's salt ; and these meet and flow
With such sweet savour in such sharpness met
That the astonished sense in ecstasy
Tastes the ripe earth and the unvintaged sea.
Wind out of Cornwall, wind, if I forget :
Not in the tunnelled streets where scarce men breathe
The air they live by, but wherever seas
Blossom in foam, wherever merchant bees
Volubly traffic upon any heath :
If I forget, shame me ! or if I find
A wind in England like my Cornish wind.

By Loe Pool.

The pool glitters, the fishes leap in the sun
With joyous fins, and dive in the pool again ;
I see the corn in sheaves, and the harvestmen,
And the cows coming down to the water one by one.
Dragon-flies mailed in lapis and malachite
Flash through the bending reeds and blaze on the pool ;
Sea-ward, where trees cluster, the shadow is cool ;
I hear a sighing, where the sea is, out of sight ;
It is noontide, and the fishes leap in the pool.

Harvest Moon.

Thoughtful luminous harvest moon, as I walk,
The rich and sumptuous night, the procession of trees
Under the moon ; the stream's babbling talk ;
One star on the eastern ridge hung low on the sea's
Border unseen ; a rose-grey shade in the west,
Faded, a petal of sunset, the absolute rose ;
Crickets chirp, the sounds of day are at rest ;
Under the harvest moon, one by one goes
The austere procession of trees, that walk as I walk.

Villa Borghese.

A grace of winter breathing like the spring ;
Solitude, silence, the thin whispering
Of water in the fountains, that all day
Talk with the leaves ; the winds, gentle as they,
Rustle the silken garments of their speech
Rarely, for they keep silence, each by each,
The dim green silence of the dreaming trees,
Cypress and pine and the cloaked ilexes,
That winter never chills ; and all these keep
A sweet and grave and unawakening sleep,
Reticent of its dreams, but hearing all
The babble of the fountains as they fall,
Chattering bright and irresponsible words
As in a baby-speech of liquid birds.

Stratford-on-Avon.

Bright leaves and the pale grass turn grey ;
Now, sudden as a thought, one swan
Moves on the water and is gone ;
The broad and liberal flood of day
Ebbs to thin twilight, and night soon
Out of the wells of dark fills up
The valley like a brimming cup
With silver waters of the moon.

This is the ardent hour of peace ;
The Avon like a mirror lies
Under the pale November skies ;
The shaken moon and the still trees
Trouble the water not a whit,
And, secret as a hidden word,
One note is spoken by one bird
As if the water answered it.

Felpham.

"Away to sweet Felpham, for heaven is there."—BLAKE.

Here Blake saw the seventy-seven
Stairs, and golden gates of heaven ;
He said "Come, for heaven is there" ;
He saw heaven where I see air,
He saw angels where I see
Only divine earth and sea.
"Bread of thought, wine of delight,"
Fed his spirit day and night,
But what heavenly bread or wine
Shall in these late days feed mine ?
What strong lust of mortal eyes
Shuts me out of Paradise ?
I can see, and 'tis enough
For my appetite of love,
Waters yellow, rose, and green,
Like the meadow-colours seen
In an opal absinthine
To the sea's pale level line ;
Lavender and yellow sand,
With painted pebbles near the land ;
Moss-grown groins all over-hung
With brown-leaved wreaths of seaweed, flung
By the sea to cover them ;
Bright wet sea-pools that begem
The duller sand ; and then green grass
Brighter than clear crysopras ;
Tufted tamarisk that is
Ruddier than burnt topazes ;

And, against the sky in rows,
Branches black with nests and crows,
To whose shelter homeward fly
Wings out of the twilight sky,
And there softly put to rest
Tired day into its nest.

The Gardener.

The gardener in his old brown hands
Turns over the brown earth,
As if he loves and understands
The flowers before their birth,
The fragile childish little strands
He buries in the earth.

Like pious children one by one
He sets them head by head,
And draws the clothes, when all is done,
Closely about each head,
And leaves his children to sleep on
In the one quiet bed.

Sea Twilight.

The sea, a pale blue crystal cup,
With pale water was brimmed up ;
And there was seen, on either hand,
Liquid sky and shadowy sand.

The loud and bright and burning day,
Charred to ashes, ebbd away ;
The listening twilight only heard
Water whispering one word.

Twilight Song.

Warder of silence, keep
Watch on the ways of sleep ;
Twilight, bringer of night,
End the day with delight.
Out of branch, out of bush,
What winds waken and hush ?
Out of hedge, out of grass,
Murmurs rustle and pass.
See, on tottering feet,
Lambs that sleepily bleat ;
Hark, from fields where they browse,
Complaining voices of cows ;
Challenging night, rings out
The cuckoo's confident shout ;
But the wailing pee-wit
Calls the night home to it.

Rome.

A high and naked square, a lonely palm ;
Columns thrown down, a high and lonely tower ;
The tawny river, ominously fouled ;
Cypresses in a garden, old with calm ;
Two monks who pass in white, sandalled and cowed ;
Empires of glory in a narrow hour
From sunset into starlight when the sky
Wakened to death behind St. Peter's dome :
That, in an eyelid's lifting, you and I
Will see whenever any man says " Rome."

London.

The sun, a fiery orange in the air,
Thins and discolours to a disc of tin,
Until the breathing mist's mouth sucks it in ;
And now there is no colour anywhere,
Only the ghost of greyness ; vapour fills
The hollows of the streets, and seems to shroud
Gulfs where a noise of multitude is loud
As unseen water falling among hills.
Now the light withers, stricken at the root,
And, in the evil glimpses of the light,
Men as trees walking loom through lanes of night
Hung with the globes of some unnatural fruit.
To live, and to die daily, deaths like these,
Is it to live, while there are winds and seas ?

Autumn.

There is so little wind at all,
The last leaves cling, and do not fall
From the bare branches' ends ; I sit
Under a tree and gaze at it,
A slender web against the sky,
Where a small grey cloud goes by ;
I feel a speechless happiness
Creep to me out of quietness.

What is it in the earth, the air,
The smell of autumn, or the rare
And half reluctant harmonies
The mist weaves out of silken skies,
What is it shuts my brain and brings
These sleepy dim awakenings,
Till I and all things seem to be
Kin and companion to a tree ?

Winter in Spring.

Winter is over, and the ache of the year
Quieted into rest ;
The torn boughs heal, and the time of the leaf is near,
And the time of the nest.

The poor man shivers less by his little hearth,
He will warm his hands in the sun ;
He thinks there may be friendliness in the earth
Now the winter is done.

Winter is over, I see the gentle and strange
And irresistible spring :
Where is it I carry winter, that I feel no change
In anything ?

Night in the Valley.

Waves of the gentle waters of the healing night,
Flow over me with silent peace and golden dark,
Wash me of sound, wash me of colour, drown the day;
Light the tall golden candles and put out the day.

Smells of the valley gather round me with the night:
Honey is in the wind and salt is in the wind,
Like a drugged cup with hot sweet scents of sleepy herbs
And sharp with fiery breaths of coolness in the cup,
Wind of the sea, wind of the valley, drunken wind.

Out of the valley, voices; hark, beyond the hedge
A long deep sigh, the human sighing of a beast;
Under the eaves the last low twitter in the thatch;
Across the valley, harsh and sweet, the patient whirr
Of the untiring bird that tells the hours of night.

Else, silence in the valley while the night goes by
Like quiet waters flowing over the loud day's
Brightness, the empty sea, and the vexed heart of man.

Wind in the Valley.

All the valley fills with wind
As a rock-pool with the tide ;
And the tumult, clashed and dinned,
Floods like waters far and wide.

The torn mainsail of the rain,
By the clutching wind strained tight,
Flaps against the window-pane,
Creaking at the mast all night.

Hands of wind are at the doors,
Feet of wind upon the roof ;
Wind with dragon voices roars
Blindly, trumpeting aloof.

Mouths of wind at all the cracks
Whistle through the walls ; and, hark !
Lashes clang on leaping backs
Of the horses of the dark.

Wind at Night.

The night was full of wind that ran
Like a strong blind distracted man
About the fields in the loud rain ;
The night was full of the wind's pain.

I looked into the naked air,
Only the crying wind was there,
In wet invisible torment, tossed
About the darkness like a ghost.

My thought in me cried out and sought
Only, like wind, to fly from thought ;
But like my thought the wind could find
Nowhere to hide out of the wind.

The Crying of the Earth.

I hear the melancholy crying of birds in the night
Over the long brown wrinkled fields that lie
As far along as the starless roots of the sky;
I hear them crying from the water out of sight,

A melancholy and insatiable and inexplicable noise,
A loud whimpering between two silences,
The silence of starry life and this that is
The silence of Earth in pain of travail: O voice

Wandering bodiless, between sky and sod,
Angry and pitiful, a crying uncomforted,
Are you not the crying of the Earth on her outraged bed,
Against Man, who has got her with child, to her father
God?

IV. GUESTS.

A Triptych.

I. S. Apollinare in Classe : Ravenna.

A temple by the wayside, a shut gate
Which no priest enters, going in to God ;
Within, carved marble columns rise in state,
Making a delicate and royal road
To the mosaic of the heavenly choir,
Where in the dome the stars about the cross
Break into golden and pale lunar fire,
And the six sheep from Bethlehem move across
To where six sheep come from Jerusalem,
Seeking their shepherd, Christ ; for these are Christ's
Apostles, sheep that love him, and with them,
Not less than they, the four Evangelists.
Age has not dwindled nor rude time effaced
This splendour : S. Apollinare stands,
Exiled, a mighty temple in the waste.
Without, a grey mist and unhappy lands ;
A pool, a thin straight line of fragile trees ;
A treeless moor, a shivering brown morass ;
Woods ruddy with the lovely bright disease
Of autumn dying into winter ; pines,
Their dark green heads aloft into the air,
Crowding together, or in travelling lines ;
Jewelled and dim, marsh-waters everywhere.

II. Isotta to the Rose: Rimini.

The little country girl who plucks a rose
Goes barefoot through the sunlight to the sea,
And singing of Isotta as she goes.

When I am dead, men shall remember me
Under my marble roses in the tomb
Built like the Virgin's shrine in Rimini.

Why should my beauty last beyond the bloom
Of any summer rose? but I must live,
Old, and not knowing, in the narrow room.

My rose, I would be frail and fugitive,
As you are; but my lover and my king
Gives me the fatal gift he has to give.

Sigismund gives me, as a little thing,
His immortality; his will is mine,
For I am his, but I stand wondering.

The woman that I am to be divine,
The body that I have to stand in stone
As Michael, and be worshipped at his shrine!

But I, like my pale roses over-blown,
Would fade and fall, and be the dust in dust,
And nothing that I ever was be known.

A little while we have for life and lust :
My marble roses, pity me, and shed
Your petals carved to hold my name in trust,

And let me be forgotten, being dead !

III. The Campo Santo : Pisa.

Death has a chapel here, and on the walls
You read his chronicle : how men who die
Are not at end after their funerals,

And how the busy loving worm sucks dry
The marrow of their bones, and other men
Sicken and stop their noses, riding by ;

And how an angel wakens them, and then
The manner of their judgment, and the way
That leads to hell and the eternal pain.

Also there is a heaven, where minstrels play
And men and women under summer boughs
Talk with each other in a golden day.

Upon the walls men love and men carouse,
Men sleep and wake, and death comes when he will,
And gathers all into his equal house.

The mournful and memorial walls are chill :
All flesh is grass, they say, and withereth ;
Yet (shall not all flesh live ?) live grasses fill

These cloisters of this sanctuary of death.

Giovanni Malatesta at Rimini.

Giovanni Malatesta, the lame old man,
Walking one night, as he was used, being old,
Upon the grey seashore at Rimini,
And thinking dimly of those two whom love
Led to one death, and his less happy soul
For which Cain waited, heard a seagull scream
Twice, like Francesca ; for he struck but twice.
At that, rage thrust down pity ; for it seemed
As if those windy bodies with the sea's
Unfriended heart within them for a voice
Had turned to mock him ; and he called them friends,
And he had found a wild peace hearing them
Cry senseless cries, halloing to the wind.
He turned his back upon the sea ; he saw
The ragged teeth of the sharp Apennines
Shut on the sea ; his shadow in the moon
Ploughed up a furrow with an iron staff
In the hard sand, and thrust a long lean chin
Outward and downward, and thrust out a foot,
And leaned to follow after. As he saw
His crooked knee go forward under him
And after it the long straight iron staff,
"The staff," he thought, "is Paolo : like that staff
And like that knee we walked between the sun
And her unmerciful eyes" ; and the old man,
Thinking of God, and how God ruled the world,
And gave to one man beauty for a snare
And a warped body to another man,
Not less than he in soul, not less than he

In hunger and capacity for joy,
Forgot Francesca's evil and his wrong,
His anger, his revenge, that memory,
Wondering at man's forgiveness of the old
Divine injustice, wondering at himself:
Giovanni Malatesta judging God.

Otho and Poppaea : A Dramatic Scene.

OTHO.

A word, Poppaea !

POPPAEA.

I will speak with you

If you will speak for kindness ; but your brows
Are sick and stormy : why do you frown on me ?

I will not speak unless it is for love.

OTHO.

Nothing but love, Poppaea ; nothing less.

POPPAEA.

Then sit by me and take my hand, and tell me

Why you are sick and stormy and unkind

For nothing less than love.

OTHO.

If I should sit

So near you as to touch you ; no, this once

I will not touch you, and this once I will

Speak to the end.

POPPAEA. [*Sitting down.*]

Why, stand then, and so far,

And come no nearer, and by all the gods

Speak, and if you would have it to be the end

You are the master here, not I.

OTHO.

Alas,

I fear the end is over. Yet, if once,
As I thought once, you loved me, if you keep
So much remembrance as to have not forgot
How, when, how much, I loved you, tell me now
What you would have me do.

POPPAEA.

You love me still ?

OTHO.

Still

POPPAEA.

And no less than when you coveted
My husband's wife, and still no less than when
You heated Caesar, praising me ?

OTHO.

No less ?

No more, Poppaea ?

POPPAEA.

There was a time once,
You loved me lightly ; there was a time once
You taught me to love lightly ; and a time
Before that time, if you had loved me then
I had not loved you lightly, Otho. Now
I have learned your lesson, and I ask of you
No more than what you taught me.

OTHO.

Miserable,
And a blind fool, and deadly to myself,
I have undone my life ; it is I who ask
What you have taught me ; for I cannot live
Without that constant poison of your love
That you have drugged me with, and withered me
Into a craving fever. There is a death
More cruel in your arms than in the grave,
More exquisite than many tortures, more
An ecstasy than agony, more quick
With vital pangs than life is. If I must,
Bid me begone, and let me go and die.

POPPAEA.

There is no man I would not rather know
Alive to love me. What have I done to you,
Otho, that you should cry against me thus ?

OTHO.

I will ask Nero : you I will not ask.

POPPAEA.

Otho, I hold your hand with both my hands,
Look in my face, and read there if I lie ;
But I will love you, Otho, if you will.

OTHO.

I hold your hands, I look into your eyes,
There is no truth in them ; they laugh with pride
And to be mistress of the souls of men.

POPPAEA.

I will not let you go unless you swear
That you believe me ; tell me, is it true,
Nothing but truth, and do you really love
Nothing but me ?

OTHO.

There is not in the world
Anything kind or cruel, anything
Worth the remembering, else : but you are false,
False for a crown, and you are Cressida,
False for the sake of falseness.

POPPAEA. [*Rising.*]

On my life,
I love you, and I will not let you go.
The crown makes not the Cæsar ; have I not found
More than a kingdom here ? Take this poor kiss,
And this, and this, for tribute.

OTHO.

Either the Gods
Have sent some madness on me, or I live
For the first time in my life.

[*NERO enters quietly and comes up to OTHO and POPPAEA.*]

NERO.

My most dear friend,
Once, being with this woman who stands here,
(Do you remember ?) you, with her good leave,
Shut to the door upon me : I knocked then,
Hearing your voices merry with the trick,

And no man opened, and I went away.
I ask now of this woman, and not now
As Cæsar, but your rival, Otho, still,
I bid her choose between us. Let her speak,
And you, my Otho, listen.

OTHO.

If the truth

Live in your soul, speak now, Poppaea, now
The last time in the world.

NERO. [*Smiling.*]

Poppaea?

POPPAEA. [*Throwing herself into his arms.*]

Need

Poppaea speak? Nero knows all her heart.

NERO.

Is this enough, Otho?

OTHO.

It is enough;

Otho knows all her heart.

Prologue for a Modern Painter.

To A. E. John.

Hear the hymn of the body of man :
This is how the world began ;
In these tangles of mighty flesh
The stuff of the earth is moulded afresh.

What struggles and cries in eyes and cheeks ?
The stir of the sap that awakes and seeks
To give again the gift it receives
And burgeon into buds and leaves ;

The sadness and the ardour of life,
Violent animal peace, the strife
Of woman's instinct and man's blood
With patterns of beauty and rules of good.

Here nature is, alive and untamed,
Unafraid and unashamed ;
Here man knows woman with the greed
Of Adam's wonder, the primal need.

The spirit of life cries out and hymns
In all the muscles of these limbs ;
And the holy spirit of appetite
Wakes the browsing body with morning light.

For a Picture of Rossetti.

Smoke of battle lifts and lies
Sullen in her smouldering eyes,
Where are seen
Captive bales of merchandize.

Here are shudderings of spears,
Webs of ambush, nets of fears,
Here have been
Prisons, and a place of tears.

In her hair have souls been caught ;
Here are snared the strength of thought,
Pride of craft,
Here desire has come to nought.

Have not her lips kissed again
Lips that kissed for love's sake, when
Her lips laughed
Like a passing-bell for men ?

This is what Rossetti says
In the crisis of a face.

A Profile.

A nymph in all her ardour towards the Faun,
Leant heavily, with open eyes alight,
And wet lips redder than an April dawn,
And panting hair, and bright cheeks burning white,
And white breast lifted on the stormy tide
That ebbs and flows through all her body, full
Of unaware desire, unfrighted pride,
And young joy making passion beautiful.

Emily Brontë.

This was a woman young and passionate,
Loving the Earth, and loving most to be
Where she might be alone with liberty ;
Loving the beasts, who are compassionate ;
The homeless moors, her home ; the bright elate
Winds of the cold dawn ; rock and stone and tree ;
Night, bringing dreams out of eternity ;
And memory of Death's unforgetting date.
She too was unforgetting : has she yet
Forgotten that long agony when her breath
Too fierce for living fanned the flame of death ?
Earth for her heather, does she now forget
What pity knew not in her love from scorn,
And that it was an unjust thing to be born ?

The Rope Maker.

I weave the strands of the grey rope,
I weave with sorrow, I weave with hope,
I weave in youth, love, and regret,
I weave life into the net.

When I was a child the care began,
And now my child shall be a man ;
When I am old and my fingers shake,
There'll be nets to mend, and more nets to make.

And life's a weary and heavy thing,
And there's no rest in the evening ;
And long or light though the labour be,
It's a life to the net, and nets to the sea.

The Chopin Player.

To Vladimir de Pachmann.

The sounds torture me : I see them in my brain ;
They spin a flickering web of living threads,
Like butterflies upon the garden beds,
Nets of bright sound. I follow them : in vain.
I must not brush the least dust from their wings :
They die of a touch ; but I must capture them,
Or they will turn to a caressing flame,
And lick my soul up with their flutterings.

The sounds torture me : I count them with my eyes,
I feel them like a thirst between my lips ;
Is it my body or my soul that cries
With little coloured mouths of sound, and drips
In these bright drops that turn to butterflies
Dying delicately at my finger tips ?

The Sick Man to Health.

I.

The eyes, that, having seen the saintly light
Blossom white-petalled out of a white sea
In a miraculous rose of breathing light,
See a patched harlot reel unsteadily,
From lamp to lamp dragging a yellow train ;
The ears, that pant with anger and quick fear
At a beloved voice heard suddenly,
Or at a half-felt echo in the brain
Of music it had once been life to hear ;
The nostrils, weary gates that open now
Upon a garden where the flowers are sick
And the dead fruit hangs rotting on the bough ;
The mouth, that now eats ashes and drinks dust,
And was so keen to savour and so quick
To sort its lust from any other's lust ;
The many hands that in the body move
To touch the world and pasture their delight
Where sacredly they did with things unite
In mutual acts of love ;
Cry to thee, with a great and feeble cry.

II.

The bones, that are the pillars, and the flesh
That is the gracious substance of the house,
And the smooth skin that spreads so fair and fresh
A covering for the walls, and all the beams
And rafters that as joints and sinews mesh

The body's framework, and the blood that streams
Like heaven's own light seen through a crimson rose
Through all the painted windows of the south ;
Cry out of tarnished colour and strained wood
And out of joists unceiled and by the mouth
Of whistling panes, that let the salt winds through ;
All these, that being evil have known good
And hunger backward for the good they knew,
Cry to thee with a long and shaken cry.

III.

The will, that ruled a city all its own,
And now, without sedition, like a king
Thrust quietly aside, is overthrown ;
The memory, that of any former thing
Could character the poise, the form, the size,
The impress of its shape upon the air,
And now, forgetting its blithe energies,
Lies drowsing in the sun, or, as it lies,
Repeats a fond arithmetic of sighs ;
Identity, that wanders like the smoke,
Following a wind that stays not anywhere ;
Conscience, that would not waken though God spoke ;
Cry to thee with an unavailing cry.

The Turning Dervish.

Stars in the heavens turn,
I worship like a star,
And in its footsteps learn
Where peace and wisdom are.

Man crawls as a worm crawls ;
Till dust with dust he lies,
A crooked line he scrawls
Between the earth and skies.

Yet God, having ordained
The course of star and sun,
No creature hath constrained
A meaner course to run.

I, by his lesson taught,
Imaging his design,
Have diligently wrought
Motion to be divine.

I turn until my sense,
Dizzied with waves of air,
Spins to a point intense,
And spires and centres there.

There, motionless in speed,
I drink that flaming peace,
Which in the heavens doth feed
The stars with bright increase.

Some spirit in me doth move
Through ways of light untrod,
Till, with excessive love,
I drown, and am in God.

The Armenian Dancer.

O secret and sharp sting
That ends and makes delight,
Come, my limbs call thee, smite
To music every string
Of my limbs quivering.

I strain, and follow on
After a joy in flight,
That flies, and is delight
Only when it is gone,
Not to be looked upon.

I strain, and would embrace
With ardours infinite
Some angel of delight
That turns his heavenly face
Ever into void space.

I dance, and as I dance
Desires as fires burn white
To fan the flame delight;
What vague desires advance
With covered countenance?

I dance, and shall not tire
Though music in my sight
Faint before my delight,
And song like a thin fire
Fail before my desire.

The sense within me turns
In labyrinths as of light,
Not dying into delight ;
As a flame quickening burns,
Speed in my body yearns.

I stop, a quivering
Wraps me and folds me tight ;
I shudder, and touch delight,
The secret and sharp sting,
Suddenly, a grave thing.

The Andante of Snakes.

They weave a slow andante as in sleep,
Scaled yellow, swampy black, plague-spotted white ;
With blue and lidless eyes at watch they keep
A treachery of silence ; infinite

Ancestral angers brood in these dull eyes
Where the long-lineaged venom of the snake
Meditates evil ; woven intricacies
Of Oriental arabesque awake,

Unfold, expand, contract, and raise and sway
Swoln heart-shaped heads, flattened as by a heel,
Erect to suck the sunlight from the day,
And stealthily and gradually reveal

Dim cabalistic signs of spots and rings
Among their folds of faded tapestry ;
Then these fat, foul, unbreathing, moving things
Droop back to stagnant immobility.

Song of the Sirens.

Our breasts are cold, salt are our kisses,
Your blood shall whiten in our sea-blisses ;
A man's desire is a flame of fire,
But chill as water is our desire,
Chill as water that sucks in
A drowning man's despairing chin
With a little kissing noise ;
And like the water's voice our voice.

Our hands are colder than your lovers',
Colder than pearls that the sea covers ;
Are a girl's hands as white as pearls ?
Take the hands of the sea-girls,
And come with us to the under-sands ;
We will hold in our cold hands
Flaming heart and burning head,
And put thought and love to bed.

We are the last desires ; we have waited,
Till, by all things mortal sated,
And by dreams deceived, the scorn
Of every foolish virgin morn,
You, awakening at last,
Drunken, beggared of the past,
In the last lust of despair
Tangle your souls into our hair.

The Lovers of the Wind.

Can any man be quiet in his soul
And love the wind? Men love the sea, the hills:
The bright sea drags them under, and the hills
Beckon them up into the deadly air;
They have sharp joys, and a sure end of them.
But he who loves the wind is like a man
Who loves a ghost, and by a loveliness
Ever unseen is haunted, and he sees
No dewdrop shaken from a blade of grass,
No handle lifted, yet she comes and goes,
And breathes beside him. And the man, because
Something, he knows, is nearer than his breath
To bodily life, and nearer to himself
Than his own soul, loves with exceeding fear.
And so is every man that loves the wind.
How shall a man be quiet in his soul
When a more restless spirit than a bird's
Cries to him, and his heart answers the cry?
Therefore have fear, all ye who love the wind.
There is no promise in the voice of the wind,
It is a seeking and a pleading voice
That wanders asking in an unknown tongue
Infinite unimaginable things.
Shall not the lovers of the wind become
Even as the wind is, gatherers of the dust,
Hunters of the impossible, like men
Who go by night into the woods with nets
To snare the shadow of the moon in pools?

Hymn to Fire.

Son of God and man,
When the world began,
First-born of love and hate,
Where was thy hid state?
Thou bliss by God denied,
Till the human pride
Snatched thee, and brought down
Heaven's breath for his own.

Spectre of the rose,
When thy red heart grows
Fierce, and thy delight
Makes a morn of night,
Do the stars grow pale,
Lest thy leapings scale
Heaven, and thou again
Harness them in thy train?

V.

VARIATIONS ON AN OLD TUNE.

Apology.

Why is it that I sing no songs of you,
Now, as in those old days I used to do ?
I have made many songs, and bitter songs,
Against you, I have done you many wrongs
In verse ; and now, when you and I can sit
By the same fire, and, looking into it
In silence, dream without unhappiness
Each his own dream in friendly loneliness,
I sing of you no longer. Still I find
Your shadow in all the corners of my mind,
And in my heart find you ; but there, alas,
Though I search every cranny where it was,
My art I find not : it is well : my art
Knew only songs for an unquiet heart.

Arab Love-Song.

What matters it to me if the rain fall,
Since I must die of thirst? Her eyes are faint,
They faint with ardent sleep, faint into love :
Her eyes are promises she will not keep.
I ask no more ; let others give me all,
While she is miser of her beauty : all
Is nothing, but her nothing is my all.
Have I not loved her when I knew not love ?
Keep far from me that bitter knowledge ; nay,
Why should I die? and if I know I die.
I have loved, and I have loved, perhaps, too much ;
If to have loved as I have loved be sin,
I pray that God may never pardon it.

Song : after Herrick.

Dear love, let's not put away
Love against a rainy day ;
You are careful, and would hoard
Some of that which can't be stored ;
For, like roses which are born
To die between a night and morn,
Being once plucked, being once worn
So the rose of love's delight
Only lasts a day or night ;
Though roses die, shall there not be
Next morn new roses on the tree ?

Song.

O why is it that a curl
Or the eyelash of a girl,
Or a ribbon from her hair,
Or a glove she used to wear,
Weighed with all a man has done,
With a thought or with a throne,
Drops the balance like a stone ?

Antony was king of men,
Cleopatra was a queen,
And for Cleopatra he
Flings away his sovereignty.
Yet as well can Kate or Nan
Find, as Cleopatra can,
Antony in any man.

The Heart's Toys.

Heart of mine, now youth is over,
Why be playing still at lover ?
Comrade, there's no use protesting,
Love at forty is but jesting.
Though the same the eternal game is,
Love at twenty not the same is.
Hearts to play with there are plenty
When the heart's at one and twenty,
But if one and forty chooses,
Who consents and who refuses ?
Heart of mine, lay down the playthings
As in childhood we would lay things
When our fancies had outgrown them,
And desert them and disown them.
Yet as children from their play-hours
Save and store for workaday hours
Doll or toy they used to care for,
Heart of mine, shall we not spare for
Days when scarcely we'll remember
Dancing April in December,
One heart's toy, as Meg and Moll do ?
What if we should save one doll too ?

Two Love-Songs.

I.

I do not know if your eyes are green or grey
Or if there are other eyes brighter than they;
They have looked in my eyes; when they look in my eyes
I can see
One thing, and a thing to be surely the death of me.

If I had been born a blind man without sight,
That sorrow would never have set this wrong thing right;
When I touched your hand I would feel, and no need to see,
The one same thing, and a thing the death of me.

Only when I am asleep I am easy in mind,
And my sleep is gone, and a thing I cannot find;
I am wishing that I could sleep both day and night
In a bed where I should not toss from left to right.

II.

O woman of my love, I am walking with you on the sand,
And the moon's white on the sand and the foam's white in
the sea ;

And I am thinking my own thoughts, and your hand is on
my hand,

And your heart thinks by my side, and it's not thinking of
me.

O woman of my love, the world is narrow and wide,

And I wonder which is the lonelier of us two ?

You are thinking of one who is near to your heart, and far
from your side ;

I am thinking my own thoughts, and they are all thoughts
of you.

Grey Twilight.

—Do you remember that long twilight? grey
Unending sand, a low grey sky, a wall
Of grey low cliffs, the sea against the sand
Flat, coloured like the sand, white at the edge,
And now and then a shouldering wave that rose
Long, black, like a ship's hull seen sideways. Grey
As the monotonous days of life, when each
Copies the day it follows, grey and still
In such a bleak repose, as if it slept
Tired out of hope, the sand lay endlessly.
We walked upon the sand, and heard the sea
Whimpering, in a little lonely voice,
And there was always sand and sea and sky,
Making a quietude of emptiness.
Do you remember?

—Such a quietude
As fire might drowse to, when its ashes burn.
It was the slumber of a violent life,
It filled me with the peace of energy.

—It filled me with the helplessness of things,
Intolerable days, intolerable hours,
The level, endless, dust-grey sand of things;
The sand slides back under our travelling feet,
Our feet labour, and there is still the sand
Infinitely before us, indefinitely
Behind us, the same sand and sea and sky.

—I was content : I saw no emptiness ;
The blood was busy in my veins ; I felt
All the young heat and colour of my blood
Fill up the hour with joy : a pause of life
Spoke to me in the greyness of the hour.
I can fill every hour with my own heat,
And colour all the hours of life with joy.

—You ; but I take my colour from the hour,
And all my hours of life are like this sand,
And I am tired of treading down the hours.

The Caged Bird.

A year ago I asked you for your soul ;
I took it in my hands, it weighed as light
As any swallow, it was poised for flight,
It was a wandering thing without a goal.
I caged it, and I tended it ; it throve ;
Wise ways I taught it ; it forgot to fly ;
It learnt to know its cage, its keeper ; I,
Its keeper, taught it that the cage was love.
And now I take my bird out of the cage,
It flutters not a feather, looks at me
Sadly, without desire, without surprise ;
See, I have tamed it, it is still and sage,
It has not strength enough for liberty,
It does not even hate me with its eyes.

An Epilogue to Love.

I.

Love now, my heart, there is but now to love ;
Seek nothing more, but let it be enough
That one desire, one moment, melts in yours.
Hold the one moment fast ; nothing endures,
And, as the past was, shall the future be ;
O heart, hold fast the present. Then to me
My heart : What is the present ? There is none.
Has not the sigh after the kiss begun
The future ? and the past was in the kiss.
Then to my heart I said : O heart, if this
Be life, then what is love ? And my heart said :
Desire of things unborn or things long dead.

II.

I who have dreamed of happiness now dream
Of happiness no more. If the extreme
Desire of you leave over some poor space
To fold my pain into a happy place,
I am content ; if not, I am content.
Not for my peace, not for my pleasure sent,
Who have no rest nor any hope to bring,
O you, of whom I know not anything,
But that you hold me and I hold you not,
And that for you, in vain, I have forgot
The world : in vain : you are the world ; I take
My foe into my keeping for your sake.
I who have dreamed of love now dream no more
Of love. It was a dream I dreamed before
I knew you. Now I know that when I fold
My arms about you, in that hour I hold
A thing made wonderful with flesh and blood ;
No more. I am content. It is not good
That men should dream by daylight : let them keep
Dreams for the kind forgetfulness of sleep.
Clip the soul's wings, hold down the heart, forget :
Yes, without dreams, I may be happy yet.

III.

Come into the dim forest of old sleep ;
Wander with me, and I will lead you deep
Through paths of sun-warmed grasses and chill ferns,
Into the shadow where a green flame burns.
Hark ! the swift rustle, wings among the leaves,
The curve of a dark sudden flight, that leaves
A quiver in the branches ; dusky throats
Sob happily, a ripple of soft notes
Begins to soothe the silence back again.
But listen, for the tiny voice of rain
Whimpers among the pattering leaves ; they cry
With easy, shining tears, the sun will dry
Off their sleek faces ; and the earth breathes in
The breath of rain, and nimble winds begin
To shake the hoarded odours of the wood
Out like a spendthrift ; and the air is good,
And kind, and sleepy. Cannot you and I
Forget to not be friends ? This is July.

IV.

I have loved life for other women's sake,
And now for your sake fear it. Can I slake
A thirst the whole world cannot satisfy?
All that I have I give, but what am I?
You have desired, you have desired in vain,
Such immortality of joy and pain
As mortal hours know nought of; you have sought
The spirit of life in all things; sense and thought
Strain after sharp delight, or drowse upon
The swift and sky-enfolding pinion
Of joy that flies in dreams between the stars.
You have loved knowledge, for that hand unbars
The gates of closed and waiting Edens; praise,
For the delicious trouble in the gaze
Of the flushed praiser; power, because power gives
Life to your life, telling you that it lives.
You have loved love, but not for love's sake, nay,
Loved to be loved; I, loving you to-day,
Know that you love my love, not me; I bring
A multitude of loves for offering,
All I have learnt in tears and ecstasies,
All my life loving: yet, shall this suffice?
Life cries at all your senses, calling you
With many voices: how shall you be true
To your own self if you are true to me?
You have loved love, you have loved liberty,
And not to love; think, do you gain or lose
By choosing bondage? love is bondage: choose!

V.

You speak to me as to an enemy,
And your warm eyes are cold only to me,
And your kind lips, that smile on all, grow stern
Only to me, and if by chance you turn
To where I sit and see you and are dumb,
A deep and friendless silence seems to come
Between us like a shadow, and you look
Into my face as into some old book.
Yet will a stillness deeper than delight,
The happy pain of joy grown infinite,
Knowing itself no more but as some pain
Too intimate for pleasure, softly rain
Into your soul like morning, if I take
Your hand in mine ; and suddenly you awake,
Out of a loneliness grown dear and strange,
And your deep quiet breathing seems to change,
Like the still water when it feels the wind ;
And, as earth thrills when night's last clouds are thinned,
A slow new wonder dawns into your face,
And little sighs breathe for a little space
Out of your breast like little smiles of sound,
Because, after the waiting, we have found
Each other ; and if this be love, I know
No more than you ; yet, if it be not so,
There is a good thing in the world, above
The best that I have ever dreamed of love.

VI.

I have not loved love, nor sought happiness,
I have loved every passionate distress,
And the adoration of sharp fear, and hate
For love's sake, and what agonies await
The unassuaged fulfilment of desire
Not eased in the having ; I have sought to tire
The fretting of the flesh grown sad with thought,
And restless with remembering ; I have sought
Forgetfulness, and rest, and liberty,
And bondage. And all these have come to me,
And all these I have suffered, and all these
Have brought no joy, and left me little ease.
Passionate and untender, I need words
Hard as bright jewels, bright and swift as birds,
If I but name you, miracle in flesh ;
O cool, for the cool winds are not more fresh,
Blowing from the sea at twilight ; flame of the deep
Roots of the earth, and sleepy with the sleep
Rustling in leafy trees and murmuring
In moonlight-shadowed woods when no birds sing ;
Young every day, forgetting by the way
Yesterday's memories with yesterday,
So making the world new again, and then
Forgetting, and so making it again.
Make a new world for me, or let me come
Into your world, and let it be a home
For my unrest, liberty from my dreams,
A place of winds and sunlight and cool streams
For my tired thought to drowse in. But no love,

No love! Earth's loveliest paradise would prove
The Eden of the snake and that wise tree
Whose wisdom was our loss of liberty,
If love, a bitterer wisdom, spoilt the taste
Of every tree that God the gardener placed
About our path in the garden, saving one.
Make a new world for me; I need the sun,
The sap of the earth, the deep breath of the wind,
The voices of the sea: these have not sinned,
Nor known mortality; and these to you
Are of your blood: I would inherit too
That kingdom, liberal of its delight,
Unageing. I would love the day and night,
As you do; I would love for its own sake
Beauty, no longer with the jealous ache
Of old desire, but freely as the air,
That breathes about all beauty everywhere.
Only, no love, not that sweet poison, brewed
From hemlock roots of kindness, that has strewed
The world with death, since, on Troy's "topless towers,"
Helen with deathless hands put back the hours.
I have not loved love; let me be; O give
Not love, but life: I would not love, but live!

VII.

Your eyes are empty streets where men have passed.
I search in vain : there is no shadow cast
Upon their silence ; yet a stealthy thing
Lurks in my heart watching and listening.
What do I seek ? what is there I should find ?
Only a little dust upon the wind,
Where many feet have trodden : let me give
Dreams to the night, and be content to live !
O, when you droop into my arms, and die
Into delight as into sleep, and lie
Enfolded deeper than a dream in sleep,
Smiling with little sleepy smiles, that creep
About the corners of your mouth, and stir
Your waking eyelids like a messenger,
Warm from the heart ; when I have seen your soul
Swoon to intense oblivion, and your whole
Body, forgotten of the soul, lie weak
And fluttering, and have feared to touch your cheek
Lest you should fade into a vaporous wreath ;
When I have seen the soul come back, and breathe
A mortal air, and with a wild surprise ;
Endured the awful questioning of eyes
Awakened out of hell or heaven, and bowed
My head in an exultant silence, loud
With triumphing voices out of hell or heaven ;
O my desire, I have beheld the seven
Heavens opened, and forgotten if time be ;
I have been drunken with an ecstasy

Older than time ; then, then that stealthy thing,
Coiled in my heart, begins awakening
The ignoble voices, and I listen : why ?
Why ? because you are you, and I am I.

VIII.

Why do I fear your past as if it stole
Some peace from the possession of my soul?
Is not to-day enough? No, not enough.
You love me: can I ask for more than love?
Yes, more than love. What then? The past. The past
Is dead, but we, who live, have met at last;
I have forgotten all the rest; forget,
And let our lives begin the day we met.
No: I remember. And if so? I take
Your past with you, in silence, for your sake;
Love as I love, take mine, be satisfied.
But you have loved? I dreamed, and all dreams died.
I would know all. Why then this vanity
To count the dead and say, these died for me?
No, not for me: they passed, they had their day,
Cried at your heart, were welcomed, went their way;
Forgotten? but their names, scrawled over, rest
Inscribed on your heart's liberal palimpsest;
I read the names there still. So do not I;
I read your eyes, that hate me, doubt me: why?
Are not my arms around you, and my heart
Warm to your hand, and are we not apart,
Exiles of love, in a kind banishment?
Am I not yours, and am I not content?
I have given you all I have; can I unlive
My life, or is there more that I can give?
I take you: will you still not take me? still
You ask, refuse, withhold? Yes. As you will!

A Song against Love.

There is a thing in the world that has been since the world began :

The hatred of man for woman, the hatred of woman for man.

When shall this thing be ended ? When love ends, hatred ends,

For love is a chain between foes, and love is a sword between friends.

Shall there never be love without hatred ? Not since the world began,

Until man teach honour to woman, and woman teach pity to man.

O that a man might live his life for a little tide

Without this rage in his heart, and without this foe at his side !

He could eat and sleep and be merry and forget, he could live well enough,

Were it not for this thing that remembers and hates, and that hurts and is love.

But peace has not been in the world since love and the world began,

For the man remembers the woman, and the woman remembers the man.

VI.
MARY IN BETHLEHEM :
A NATIVITY.

Mary in Bethlehem : A Nativity.

MARY. THE THREE SHEPHERDS.
JOSEPH. THE THREE KINGS.

The Scene represents the Stable in Bethlehem. MARY has just awakened, and is bending over the manger where the Child lies asleep. JOSEPH lies asleep on the ground.

MARY.

Is it the morning? I am cold.
Look out and tell me if the moon
Has led the stars into their fold ;
Then shut the door and make it fast.

[JOSEPH rises, goes to the door, and looks out.

JOSEPH.

The night is blue, with stars of gold ;
The middle watch of night is past ;
See now, it will be morning soon !
Yet there is time enough for sleep.

[He shuts the door, and stands near the manger.

MARY.

The child is sleeping, I have slept,
And in my dream I think I wept ;
I will not sleep again and weep.

JOSEPH.

Tell me the dream.

MARY.

I seemed to see
A mighty city, as it were
The city of Jerusalem ;
And all the folk ran to and fro,
Shouting, and in the midst of them
Three woeful figures, and the three
Bore each a cross he could not bear ;
And as I looked I seemed to know
The face of one of them, and then
Such bitter tears began to flow
That I awakened, and in fear
Felt for my child, and he was here,
And I was comforted again.

JOSEPH.

O Mary, have no fear at all ;
God is our father, and shall keep
Our feet, whether we wake or sleep.
Lie down again, and lay your head
Here, where the careful ox has fed
That stands in sleep beside his stall.

[He lies down again and sleeps.]

MARY.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord !
It was an angel, and I said
The words I feared to understand.
What was it when upon my bed
Suddenly the mild glory poured,
And in the glory was a voice
Bidding my soul greatly rejoice,

Because the Lord God was at hand ?
O child of mine, marvellously
Born of the shadow of God, can this
Be for no great design of his
Who sits upon the flaming sun
And sets his feet upon the sea ?
If I but knew what he decreed,
Before this body of mine was made
To be the mother of his son,
Then were I satisfied indeed ;
But now the angels come no more ;
I wait and dream and am afraid.

[There is a knocking at the door, and JOSEPH awakens.]

JOSEPH.

There is a knocking at the door.

[He opens the door ; the THREE SHEPHERDS come in.]

FIRST SHEPHERD.

Sir, if a newborn child be here
That in a manger lies,
We pray you that you let us near
To see him with our eyes.

JOSEPH.

Good shepherds, it is early morn ;
But come ; his mother wakes ; come in ;
There was no housing in the inn,
Beside a manger he was born,
And there in swaddling clothes he lies.

SECOND SHEPHERD.

O brother shepherds, we have found
The Saviour as they said ;
Let us kneel down upon the ground
And pray about his bed.

[*The SHEPHERDS kneel.*]

MARY.

Shepherds, good shepherds, tell me why
You come about the break of day,
And kneel before my child, and pray,
As if the stable where we lie
Were holy, or the Lord were nigh.

[*The SHEPHERDS rise.*]

THIRD SHEPHERD.

We shepherds watched our flocks by night,
And lo, an angel made
A glory of exceeding light,
And we were sore afraid.

Then said the angel : Shepherds all,
Fear not ; I bring from heaven
Good tidings of great joy, which shall
Be to all people given.

For unto you is born this day
A Saviour, and his name
Is Christ the Lord ; go ye your way
With haste to Bethlehem.

There, wrapped in swaddling clothes he lies,
A manger for his sleep.
There was a singing in the skies,
And we forgot our sheep.

MARY.

O shepherds, kneel if ye will kneel ;
I know not what these tidings be,
But my heart kneels, even as ye.
Then go your way, and may the peace
Of God be on us all.

*[The SHEPHERDS one after another bow before the
Child, and go out.]*

I feel
The wonder growing in my side.

JOSEPH.

Mary, what tidings then are these,
That have but come to shepherd folk,
Poor men that know not anything ?
Think you it was God's angel spoke ?
Shall these find God out, if he hide
His will from Herod, who is king ?

MARY.

That which God wills he wills ; if he
Have need of such a messenger,
Then would he send to us a king.

*[There is a knocking at the door, and the THREE
KINGS come in.]*

GASPAR.

Gate of light, window of the sky,
And mother of the dawn, I bring
A tribute of Arabian myrrh
Out of the fragrant East, where I
Talk with the stars, and am a king.

[He gives myrrh.]

MELCHIOR.

Garden of spices, lily of fire,
Flame of sweet smoke, I am a king,
And for your heavenly child I bring
The East's whole odours that enfold
The earth for a burnt offering.

[He gives frankincense.]

BALTHASAR.

I am a king, and African ;
I bring, out of the dark earth, gold,
Which is the light of my desire.
Our gold and myrrh and frankincense
Take, Mother of the King of Man.

[He gives gold.]

JOSEPH.

My lords, we are but humble men.

MARY.

O kings, I am your handmaiden.
Have ye met shepherds going hence
Into the valley to their fold ?

GASPAR.

The angel shepherd of a star
While we in paths of heaven trod
Called to us in the East afar
And led our feet to Bethlehem :
The shepherd of the flock of God.

MARY.

Have the stars speech, that they can bring
Your feet to this poor manger-bed ?

MELCHIOR.

The stars are wise : we talk with them ;
A star spoke out of heaven, and said :
Follow, and I will bring you where
A king, who is the King of Kings,
Has built his throne. His throne we see.

MARY.

Where is this throne ? and where is he ?

BALTHASAR.

This is the King of Kings, he lies
Within a lowly manger-bed,
Whose name was written in the skies.
Bow down before the King of Kings,
For we have seen the face of him
Before whose face the burning eyes
Of the flame-hearted stars grow dim,
Veiling with unastonished wings
Their faces from the face of him
Whose name was written in the skies.

[*The THREE KINGS kneel before the Child, and go out.*]

JOSEPH.

Mary, the child shall be a king.

[He goes aside.]

MARY.

Blessed among all women, yea,
I have been chosen for this thing.
Now I have waited long enough,
I do not hope nor am afraid,
I do not look upon the way,
I have been chosen by God's love.
Now is this body, that was made
Of sinful and of mortal clay,
In the warm love of God arrayed,
And I am his, and he is mine ;
And now I know that I have known
God, all of God, and God alone,
And that the son of God must be
As God is, human yet divine,
God in the Godhead, man in me.
O, when I hold my little child
Against my heart and stoop to see
If he has waked from sleep and smiled,
I carry an immortal load ;
My child, no less my child to me
Because I know my child is God.

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